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SUBJECT: HDAC CODEL ENGAGES LIBERIAN LEGISLATURE ON ETHICS

¶1. SUMMARY. In a successful visit to Liberia June 29-July 1, the U.S. House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC), led by U.S. Representative David Price (D-NC), held six workshops for the Liberian Legislature in the newly renovated Capitol building. The CODEL visited the port city of Buchanan, where they participated in a Grand Bassa County Town Hall Meeting with Legislators from the county. The delegation also paid a courtesy call on Vice President Boakai, visited several USAID projects, and received a briefing from the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Throughout their visit, HDAC members stressed the importance of ethics and proactive representation of constituents. END SUMMARY.

HDAC PROVIDES TRAINING TO LIBERIAN LEGISLATURE

¶12. The House Democracy Assistance Commission, led by Representative David Price (D-NC) made its third visit to Liberia in as many years as part of its ongoing partnership with the Liberian Legislature. Five Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and eight Congressional staffers conducted six concurrent day-long workshops inside the newly renovated Capitol building June 30. The National Democratic Institute worked closely with the Embassy to organize the substance of the training.

- ¶11. Standing Rules and Procedures (Members)
- ¶12. Standing Rules and Procedures (Staff)
- ¶13. Budget Analysis (Members)
- ¶14. Budget Analysis (Staff)
- ¶15. Committee Operations (Members)
- ¶16. Research and Analysis (Staff)

¶13. Each of the sessions included a component on ethics, which led to a lively debate about the difference between "lobbying" and "corruption." A few Liberian Members acknowledged that they had never heard of the concept of the "appearance" of wrong-doing vs. actual wrong-doing and pledged that they would do a better job of monitoring their behavior to avoid bad "appearances."

¶14. Approximately 45 of the 64 Members of the House and most of the Senate's Leadership attended at least one of the sessions. Each of the staff sessions were packed to standing room only (with approximately 50 attendees in each) for the entire day. Both groups actively participated and asked enthusiastic questions, but the level of interest in the staff sessions meant they could have continued on for several more hours.

HDAC PARTICIPATES IN GRAND BASSA TOWN HALL MEETING

¶15. The delegation took part in a June 29 Town Hall meeting in Buchanan organized by the Grand Bassa Legislative Caucus and the National Democratic Institute. The U.S. HDAC members were impressed by the tough questions the eighty citizens who attended the meeting asked the Liberian legislators and used those questions to stimulate discussion during the training sessions at the Capitol.

VICE PRESIDENT GIVES DELEGATION OVERVIEW OF PRS

¶16. Vice President Boakai and representatives of the Ministries of Planning, Justice, Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Education gave the HDAC delegation an overview of the objectives of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy June 30. They explained that enhanced security, governance, rule of law, roads, education, and decentralization were crucial components of the strategy and thanked the U.S. for its assistance in these areas.

HDAC MEMBERS AND SPOUSES VISIT U.S.-FUNDED PROJECTS

¶17. All delegation members toured the Grand Bassa County Administration Building that USAID had just renovated and attended a presentation by Alfalit, a USAID-funded literacy program for market women. The spouses visited a teacher-training program at the Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute and toured Redemption Hospital, the recipient of medical equipment from the Africa Partnership Station.

TRC GIVES BRIEFING TO DELEGATION

¶18. Commissioner Coleman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) told the delegation that due to increased public interest in the process, the TRC will request to extend its mandate from December 2008 until June 2009. The Commissioners are now sending letters asking suspected perpetrators to come forward and testify and telling them that their willingness to do so will affect the TRC's decision on whether or not to recommend them for prosecution. Coleman said the TRC has the ability to grant amnesty to

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those accused of anything except violations of human rights and war crimes, which means that it cannot grant amnesty to any of the suspected perpetrators it really wishes to hear from. The TRC has the power to subpoena but has not used it yet. Commissioner Coleman believes the current letter approach is more conducive to the healing and reconciliation the TRC hopes to achieve, but will not hesitate to issue a subpoena later on if necessary.

COMMENT

¶19. The HDAC visit was a success on many levels, but particularly with regard to deepening its partnership with the Liberian Legislature. Liberian staff participation and enthusiasm far exceeded anyone's expectations and both sides agreed to the need for more sessions at the staff level at future engagements. A competent, professional staff in the Liberian Legislature would provide institutional expertise and give Members more time to visit their Congressional districts.

MEMBERS OF THE HDAC DELEGATION:

- ¶11. Rep. David Price (D-NC), HDAC Chairman
- ¶12. Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA), HDAC Member
- ¶13. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN), HDAC Member
- ¶14. Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN)
- ¶15. Rep. Mel Watt (D-NC)
- ¶16. Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC)

SPOUSES:

- ¶11. Ms. Lisa Price
- ¶12. Ms. Eulada Watt
- ¶13. Ms. Martha Cooper

STAFF:

- ¶11. John Lis, HDAC Staff Director
- ¶12. Brad Smith, Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Rules
- ¶13. Barbara Chow, Policy Director, House Budget Committee

- ¶4. Tommy Ross, Legislative Assistant, Office of Rep. David Price
¶5. Rachael Leman, Policy Director, Officer of Rep. David Dreier
¶6. Janice McKinney, Assistant Director, Office of Interparliamentary Affairs
¶7. Nicholas Cook, Specialist in African Affairs, Congressional Research Service
¶8. Lauren Ploch, Analyst in African Affairs, Congressional Research Service

MILITARY ESCORTS:

- ¶1. Col. Paul Kennedy, USMC
¶2. Maj. Speros Koumparakis, USMC
¶3. Gy. Sgt. Ramses Cypress, USMC
¶4. Dr. Sam Wanko, USN

BOOTH